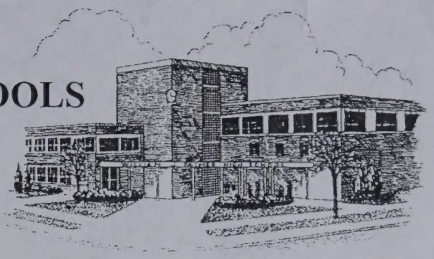
COLORADO SPRINGS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 11



WILLIAM J. PALMER HIGH SCHOOL
301 N. Nevada Ave.
COLORADO SPRINGS, COLORADO 80903

March 4, 2005

Dear Parents:

Yesterday, I spoke with your students about a challenge that will face us on March 11th. A group of protestors from Topeka, Kansas has promised to protest at Palmer. They choose to come here to make a national statement against homosexuality and anything that threatens their beliefs. The group calls itself the WBC, the Westboro Baptist Church, or the Fred Phelps group and uses highly inflammatory rhetoric to attract publicity. They recently had a short article written about them in the February 28th *Time* magazine if you are interested in reading a bit about them.

We have been working closely with the Colorado Springs Police Department because we want to assure that this group is merely a group that protests and is not dangerous – much like the protestors that we remember so well from October. The police assure us that this is the case with the exception that these protestors are well known – that is that they travel the nation seeking to make a statement and to make people angry. They are a non-violent group; nevertheless, the CSPD will be working closely with us for the short time that the group will be outside of Palmer on the 11th of March. We also have School District Eleven security and Palmer security working on a very tight plan to assure the continuation of a school day with a priority for student safety and security.

The group protests across the nation, so the police are aware that the group follows the itinerary that they set for themselves. The protestors will arrive at 7:00 AM, and they will stay until the first bell rings. You can help us on March 11th by dropping your student off in the North parking lot of the school by the auxiliary gym and asking your student to enter the small gym doors. We will be celebrating Kindness Week activities all week – a week that student leaders have been planning all year! On this date, your student should enter the building and enjoy a breakfast with his or her peers.

When I spoke with students on Thursday, I reminded them that Palmer is an amazing school – which is why over 600 students request a permit to Palmer each year. 1850 students of all colors, backgrounds, religions, and beliefs walk our hallways each day, and each one is respected and honored for what he or she brings to our community. We have incredible students who think for themselves, who score off of the charts on national and state assessments, who lead Palmer to "High" ratings on State report cards, and who are Boettcher and Merit Scholar finalists. We have students who go on to attend Harvard, CU, CC, Pikes Peak Community College and to enter the work force; each one brings to the community a unique perspective that can't be found in any other high school. Diversity and tolerance is the spirit of Palmer – I believe that is the reason that Palmer is so often the target of groups such as this. I believe this is the reason that Palmer is so often watched. Our students continue to pass the test of public scrutiny.

I ask that you do what you can to help them do the right thing again next Friday – please ask them not to respond to the protestors. I am sorry that they have been targeted this year by protest groups that have disrupted their school days and caused many concerns and sadness. It isn't fair and it isn't right. But I know that they are strong enough and mature enough to handle these challenges with class. I'm proud of them, and I thank you for sending great young people to us each day. Please don't hesitate to call on any staff member for assistance should you have a question or a concern. Please let us know how we can help!

Sincerely,

Karin Reynolds

Karin Reynolds
Principal